

**PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT: MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA**

**June 14, 2006**

1. This Public Announcement is being updated to alert Americans to ongoing security concerns in the region in light of recent events, including the death of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the deaths of three detainees at the U.S. naval base in Guantanamo, and the clashes between Palestinians and Israelis in Gaza, the West Bank and Israel. U.S. citizens are reminded to maintain a high level of vigilance and to take appropriate steps to increase their security awareness. This Public Announcement supersedes the Public Announcement issued on December 15, 2005 and expires on December 14, 2006.

2. Credible information has indicated terrorist groups seek to continue attacks against U.S. interests in the Middle East and North Africa. Terrorist actions may include bombings, hijackings, hostage taking, kidnappings and assassinations. While conventional weapons such as explosive devices are a more immediate threat in many areas, use of non-conventional weapons, including chemical or biological agents must be considered a possible threat. Terrorists do not distinguish between official and civilian targets. Increased security at official U.S. facilities has led terrorists and their sympathizers to seek softer targets such as public transportation, residential areas, and public areas where people congregate including restaurants, hotels, clubs, and shopping areas. The November 2005 bombings against three Western hotel chains in Jordan and the April 2006 bombing in the resort town of Dahab, Egypt underscore the intent of terrorist entities to target facilities perceived to cater to Westerners. Potential targets are not limited to those companies or establishments with overt U.S. ties. For instance, terrorists may target movie theaters, liquor stores, bars, casinos or any similar type establishment, regardless of whether they are owned and operated by host country nationals. Due to varying degrees of security at all such locations, Americans should be particularly vigilant when visiting these establishments.

3. The death of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the deaths of three detainees at the U.S. naval base in Guantanamo, and the clashes between Palestinians and Israelis have the potential to produce demonstrations and unrest throughout the region. In addition, the Department of State continues to warn of the possibility for violent actions against U.S. citizens and interests in the region. Uncertainty associated with the change in the Palestinian Authority government in the West Bank and Gaza may lead to increased levels of instability in the region. Anti-American violence could include possible terrorist actions against aviation, ground transportation and maritime interests, specifically in the Middle East, including the Red Sea, Persian Gulf, the Arabian Peninsula and North Africa.

4. The Department is concerned that extremists may be planning to carry out attacks against Westerners and oil workers on the Arabian Peninsula. Armed attacks targeting foreign nationals in Saudi Arabia that resulted in many deaths and injuries, including U.S. citizens, appear to have been preceded by extensive surveillance. Tourist destinations in Egypt that are frequented by Westerners recently have been attacked resulting in many deaths and injuries, including Americans. Extremists may be surveilling Westerners, particularly at hotels, housing areas and rental car facilities. Potential targets may include U.S. contractors, particularly those related to military interests.

5. Americans considering seaborne travel near the Horn of Africa or in the southern Red Sea should exercise extreme caution, as there have been several incidents of armed attacks and robberies at sea by pirates in the last year. Military action by U.S. and allied navies in several subsequent incidents resulted in the capture or death of pirates threatening international commerce. No U.S. citizens have been hurt in these attacks. When transiting around the Horn of Africa or in the Red Sea near Yemen, it is strongly recommended that vessels travel in convoys, and maintain good communications contact at all times. For more information on piracy off the Horn of Africa, please see the East Africa Public Announcement at [http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis\\_pa\\_tw/pa/pa\\_1158.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/pa/pa_1158.html).

6. On occasion, the travel of official personnel at embassies and consulates around the world is restricted because of security concerns, and these posts may recommend that private U.S. citizens avoid the same areas if at all possible. Services to U.S. citizens in countries abroad may be affected if employees' movements are restricted. If this happens, U.S. embassies and consulates will make every effort to provide emergency services to U.S. citizens. In case office hours are reduced, U.S. citizens in need of emergency assistance should telephone the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate before visiting in person.

7. In addition, U.S. citizens planning to travel to the Middle East or North Africa should consult the Department of State's country-specific Public Announcements, Travel Warnings, Consular Information Sheets, the Worldwide Caution Public Announcement and other information, available on the Consular Affairs Internet website at <http://travel.state.gov>. Up-to-date information on security conditions can also be obtained by calling 1-888- 407-4747 in the U.S. and for callers outside the U.S. and Canada a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444.